



# Rhode Island Federation of Garden Clubs

*Spring 2021 Newsletter*

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## PRESIDENTS REPORT

*PRESIDENT SHERYL HANSON MCGOOKIN*

Hey everyone, this spring I will begin my term as the RIFGC President. I began my garden club career with the Edgewood Garden Club in 2004. I enjoyed many years as the youth chair, then added secretary, vice president/programs chair, and president to the list. During my time with EGC I was also teaching middle school mathematics, served as the school yearbook advisor, and for over 15 years I enjoyed my position as director of Arts & Crafts at a NH summer camp. My other garden club experiences include time spent working on the RIFGC Flower Show; I spent four years as co-chair of the Flower Show Youth Exhibit and for the past few years I have spent many hours, as so many of you, on the RI Home and Garden Show.



In addition to garden club activities, I love spending time in my vegetable garden and my perennial beds. I also enjoy being in the woods on my mountain bike or in my hiking boots. As many of you know, I recently moved from Edgewood to Hope Valley RI. My husband and I enjoy kayaking on the Wood River and motorcycle rides in the country. Our new property has a beautiful barn that EGC used to hold an awesome square dance in the fall of 2019. Our kids are in college now and have directly benefited from many years in the youth garden club & outdoor programming; my son is a Forestry major and many of you know my daughter, Ruby, she is a full and active member of the Edgewood Garden Club as youth chair while studying Graphic Design.

I mention my own kids to reinforce the idea that youth programs can have a significant impact on the future of gardening and a healthy environment. I would like to work with all of you in a way that the RI Federation both supports and helps to create programming that will lead us to a healthy environment by connecting and caring with membership and member interests.

I am looking forward to working with you all as we continue to make the world a better place through all aspects of gardening and design.

RIFGC **Caring & Connecting.**



# 2021 CALENDAR

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22 APRIL

**Annual Meeting**  
Via Zoom

03 JUNE

**Board Meeting**  
Via Zoom, Link will  
be released closer to  
the date

17-20 MAY

**NGC Annual  
Convention**  
Virtual, Zoom link to  
be released.

23 SEPT.

**RIFGC Board  
Meeting at RWP  
Casino Thursdays**  
10-11am, 9:30-10am  
pre-meeting meet up

12 & 13 OCT.

**NEGC Annual  
Meeting**  
Wells, Maine

28 OCT.

**RIFGC Board  
Meeting at RWP  
Casino Thursdays**  
10-11am, 9:30-10am  
pre-meeting meet up

2 DEC.

**RIFGC Board  
Meeting at RWP  
Casino Thursdays**  
10-11am, 9:30-10am  
pre-meeting meet up

NOVEMBER

**Education Day**  
Time & Place TBD

*This calendar is unfit for print, please see the the print-friendly 8.5x11" version of this calendar attached separately in the newsletter email.*



# 2022 CALENDAR

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27 JAN.

**RIFGC Board  
Meeting at RWP  
Casino Thursdays**  
10-11am, 9:30-10am  
pre-meeting meet up

24 FEB.

**RIFGC Board  
Meeting at RWP  
Casino Thursdays**  
10-11am, 9:30-10am  
pre-meeting meet up

24 MARCH

**RIFGC Board  
Meeting at RWP  
Casino Thursdays**  
10-11am, 9:30-10am  
pre-meeting meet up

APRIL

**Earth Day Program**  
Time & Place TBD

28 APRIL

**Annual Luncheon**  
Time & Place TBD

16-20 MAY

**NGC Annual  
Convention**  
Orlando, FL

2 JUNE

**RIFGC Board  
Meeting at RWP  
Casino Thursdays**  
10-11am, 9:30-10am  
pre-meeting meet up

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## JUDY GRAY

*VICE PRESIDENT*

I am originally from the White Mt. Region of NH, and relocated eight years ago to Cranston. Upon arriving in Rhode Island, I quickly joined the Bayberry Garden Club of Bristol. My interest in garden clubs began when I was asked to participate in a flower show 30 years ago, and from then on, I was hooked.



In New Hampshire I served as President of the Ashland Garden Club and held numerous committee chair positions including Flower Show Chairman and was instrumental in organizing the Book in Bloom Series both in New Hampshire and Rhode Island.

My love is floral design and I have participated at both the local and state level. Included among the many shows I have entered designs are the New England Spring Flower Show in Boston, NHFGC Flower Show, RIFGC Flower Show, Newport Flower Show, Boston Art in Bloom at the Museum of Fine Arts, Flora and Winter at the Worcester Art Museum, as well as numerous local flower shows, symposiums, and the Art in Bloom Series throughout New Hampshire.

My life is busy, working as a building contractor and raising a teenager. My interests are close to home- gardening and cooking. Both my education in Culinary Arts and my experience as owner of an estate gardening company have proved invaluable.

## PAUL NUNES

TREASURER

I have a knack for “keeping the books” and I’m delighted to serve again as RIFGC’s Treasurer. In my day job, I served as the chief financial officer of a global manufacturing company. I started gardening at a young age, experimenting with seeds in my mother’s and grandparents’ gardens. My dad and I owned a garden center until his retirement a decade ago.



When I’m not traveling for work (or, these days, on Zoom conferences), I spend time in the garden and with my three dogs, cat, chickens, and ducks on a country Seekonk property where my partner and I moved six years ago after rehabbing an old farmhouse. We also recently began bee-keeping.

I have been a member of Edgewood Garden Club since 2006 and served as EGC’s president from 2018 to 2020. I’ve been very active in the Edgewood Garden Club in various roles from serving as the Awards chair to planning programming to working on community gardens.



## LINDA ALVES

*RECORDING SECRETARY*

My interest in gardening began at a young age when my parents had huge vegetable gardens which produced enough food for our family of eight. When I got married I realized I would have to buy fresh vegetables and decided to create a vegetable garden of my own.



I have been a member of the Western Cranston Garden Club for 22 years. I have served as the President, Co-President, Vice President, and Corresponding Secretary. I have also chaired many Standing Committees including Arbor Day, Adopt a Spot garden, Earth Day, Federation News, Horticulture, Membership and Photography. I have also enjoyed helping with a variety of gardening programs at Garden City School, Stadium School, and Scituate Middle & High School with Students Against Drunk Driving (SADD.) This project's theme was "It is the student's vision that this garden can become a reminder that we all need to reach out to others and to be sure no one is alone." Our group, along with the students, planted 800 white crocus bulbs.

For the Rhode Island Federation of Garden Clubs I have served on the Executive Board as Corresponding Secretary and as Hostess. I have chaired the Horticulture Committee for four years, and the Habitat for Humanity Committee for four years.

I learned the art of floral design through the great programs offered by our garden club, the RIFGC and by attending flower shows including the Philadelphia Flower Show. In 2014 I became a URI Master Gardener



and enjoy working in the Master Gardener Produce Gardens at Roger William Park. Last year during the pandemic the garden produced 577 pounds of much needed herbs and vegetables which were donated to Amos House and Providence Rescue Mission.

In addition to my gardening activities I am a yoga instructor at Dragonfly Studio in Cranston, RI where I incorporate nature in my classes.

I am married to Joe, a wonderful husband and best friend. We have a daughter, Sarah, who is an elementary teacher in MA and Adjunct for Wheaton College. Our son, Justin, is an Art Director/Design Coordinator in NY. I have two grandchildren, Alice and Lucy. They are both eager to share my joy of gardening and I take this opportunity to explain the importance of caring for our Earth and helping them learn how to grow flowers and vegetables.

I am looking forward to serving as RIFGC Recording Secretary along with our new President and Executive Board for the 2021-2023 term.

## KATHY BESSETTE

*CORRESPONDING SECRETARY*

I happily belong to two garden clubs at this time. In 1996 I joined the Gentian Garden Club where I have been a member for 24 years! I have served as Co-President, Vice President, 2nd Vice President, Treasurer, Program Chair, and I am currently serving as Secretary for a second term. Four years ago when I retired and moved to Pawtucket to be closer to family I joined the Angel Tree Garden Club in North Attleboro where my Mom is also a member. At Angle Tree I have served as Vice President, Program Chair, and I am currently the Treasurer. I have agreed to serve as Secretary during the next term. Angle Tree is a smaller club than Gentian but both clubs have lovely members which makes my involvement with both a lot of fun and very rewarding.



I thought I would be bored when I retired but I found it is true what many people say “how did I find time to work”! In addition to my garden club activities, I am Minister to the Sick at my church, St. Teresa’s. I serve as membership Chair for the Friends of the Pawtucket Public Library. I monitor a mile of the 10 Mile River Greenway in Pawtucket for the Blackstone Valley Heritage Corridor by picking up trash, and I belong to a book club at the Pawtucket Library. I live with my husband Ray and our rescue dog Bentley. I love to garden, read, hike, travel and spend time with family. I am looking forward to the end of the Covid pandemic so our lives can get back to normal!

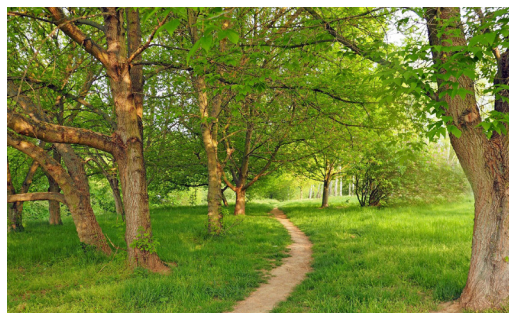
# ENVIRONMENTAL INITIATIVES IN RHODE ISLAND

SARAH LEE, EDGEWOOD GARDEN CLUB

As Rhode Islanders, our quality of life is often tied into our access to the outdoors and local waterways. For better air quality, we need to embrace alternative energy but not by cutting down trees. Grow Smart Rhode Island and others would like to limit building both wind and solar projects in forestland. The city of Cranston put a stop to deforestation for solar farms. There are plenty of brownfields, rooftops and industrial sites to be incentivized and utilize first. Get an estimate for installing solar panels on your roof!

A more local tree initiative is the neighborhood tree planting programs that are run through the Rhode Island Tree Council in conjunction with cities and towns. This program helps to replace the street trees taken down because of power lines and sidewalk issues. Homeowners apply for a free shade tree to be planted on their property. Visit [ritree.org](http://ritree.org) or Call your city or town and ask if they have such a program.

With our many waterways in Rhode Island, it is important to understand what we can do to keep them clean. Save the Bay is working to help cities and towns pass legislation to restrict the use of fertilizers. They propose practical things like not applying fertilizer between October and April, before heavy rains, on impervious surfaces, or within 100 ft of public waterbodies. Both Charlestown and Barrington have successfully passed such legislation.



Homeowners can help with local pollution and flooding by campaigning for less paved areas in commercial development and by creating bioswales alongside of parking lots and as buffers to ponds and other waterways.

One can see this in action along the ponds in Roger Williams Park and a larger one along the Johnson & Wales Harborside campus and Save the Bay in Providence. Trees also help to absorb a great amount of water so think twice before you cut down any healthy tree!



© PHOTO COURTESY OF THE NARRAGANSETT BAY COMMISSION

Statewide, a huge environmental success has been the Combined Sewer Overflow project. This has been going on quietly below the ground, tunneling storage for the water runoff that would overwhelm the water treatment facilities and

pollute the bay. It is in its last stage of construction and will address the areas north of Providence; Central Falls, Pawtucket, and East Providence. It is a major contributor to the improved water quality in the upper bay.

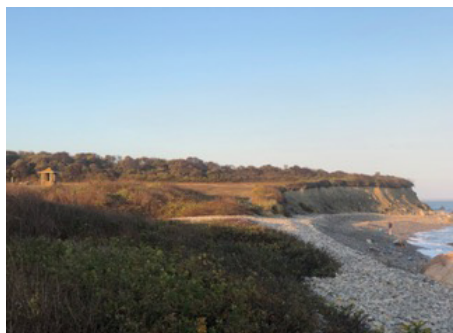


## LITTLE COMPTON'S "TOWN LANDING"

JEANNE W. MCALLISTER, SOGKONATE GARDEN CLUB

There is a special place in Little Compton, Rhode Island, locally referred to as the "Town Landing". It sits seaside on a lovely bluff with wide ocean views of Martha's Vineyard to the southeast, and on a perfect day, of Block Island to the southwest. There is a short trail down to a rocky beach. A haven for outdoor activities, the "Landing" welcomes walkers, runners, birders, strollers, bikers, and even drivers, though the parking is limited. People come to sit and watch the sea life, the surfers and boaters, and to enjoy a seasonal picnic.

Hester Simmons is the benefactor of the Town Landing. Ms. Simmons' home, once situated upon the Landing's bluff, was blown away in the Hurricane of 1938. Upon her death in 1948 she left the remaining property to Little Compton. Her will stipulated it be "used for recreational purposes- free to all." As



lovely as it is, the "Landing" has suffered from neglect over the years. The bluff has eroded and is rutted from poor drainage which has resulted in deterioration of the grasses. A recent volunteer committee partnered with town officials to seek funding for improvements.

Some Sogkonate Garden Club (SGC) members and spouses of members serve on this committee. Almost \$170,000 was raised through contributions from the RI DEM (\$80K), the town of Little Compton (\$23K) and private donations (\$66K). The resources raised have allowed for an environmental engineer and landscape architect to create and implement a transformation plan. Save the Bay staff members also contributed consultation to the effort. Private funds will be dedicated to future protection needs. Work began in the fall of 2020 and will be completed this spring. The result should be a safer, more beautiful, and environmentally

resilient public recreational space. SGC members voted overwhelmingly in January to make a representative donation to the Town Landing fund. The Covid 19 pandemic caused many club events to be canceled, postponed, or moved online which resulted in the availability of unanticipated funds. As the pandemic increased desire for outdoor spaces in which to exercise and enjoy fresh air, the membership felt the timing was ripe to support the improvement of this vital community asset. Members also have a particular interest in the native plantings that will be selected in order to create natural habitats and prevent further deterioration and erosion.

*Plan an outing this summer to enjoy the revitalized  
Little Compton's "Town Landing."*





# WHITE-BREASTED NUTHATCH *SITTA CAROLINENSIS*

SUE REDDEN, RIFGC BIRD CHAIR

This is a small acrobatic bird that climbs up, down, and around tree trunks and branches, is a little larger than a Chickadee, with a stocky angular body, short tail, a wedge tipped dagger-like bill, and long strong hind claws that anchor it to a tree trunk. When moving head-first down a tree trunk, the nuthatch probably has an advantage– the perspective reveals insects hidden in crevices of the tree bark that other birds, like woodpeckers, might miss as they move upward.



Nuthatches are common in mature deciduous and mixed woods and feed on insects and seeds. Suet feeders will likely attract any nuthatches living in your neighborhood.

Their song is a series of soft nasal, whistled notes *whi-whi-whi-whi* on one pitch. The nest of bark shreds, hair, and feathers is found in natural

cavities, knotholes, woodpecker's hole, or birdbox. Three to ten small white to pinkish eggs with purple, brown, gray, and red blotches incubated by the female. The nuthatch is vulnerable to habitat loss due to logging operations.



© EDWARD KINSMAN, SCIENCE PHOTO LIBRARY

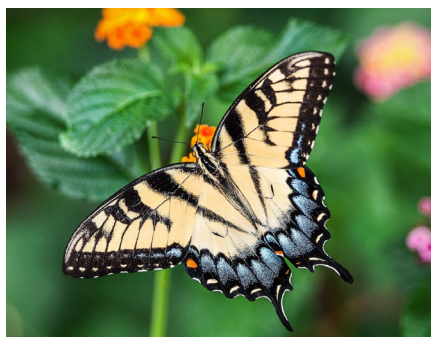
# PLANTING A POLLENATOR GARDEN

VERA BOWEN

*Careful planning is essential in creating a successful pollinator garden. Follow these easy steps to make sure you have everything covered before you make your investment.*

## **Choosing Your Location**

While flowering plants can grow in both shady and sunny locations, consider your audience. Butterflies and other pollinators like to bask in the sun and some of their favorite wildflowers grow best in full or partial sun with some protection from the wind.



## **Identifying Soil Type and Sunlight**

Take a look at your soil, is it sandy and well-drained or more clay-like and wet? You can turn over a test patch or check out the soil mapper for your county to learn more. Your soil type and the amount of sunlight it gets will help determine the kinds of plants you can grow.

## **Choosing Your Plants**

Research which varieties of milkweed and wildflowers are native to your area and do well in your soil and sunlight conditions. Native plants are the ideal choice, because they require less maintenance and tend to be heartier. Find a nursery that specializes in native plants near you– they'll be familiar with plants that are meant to thrive in your part of the country. It's essential to choose plants that have not been treated with

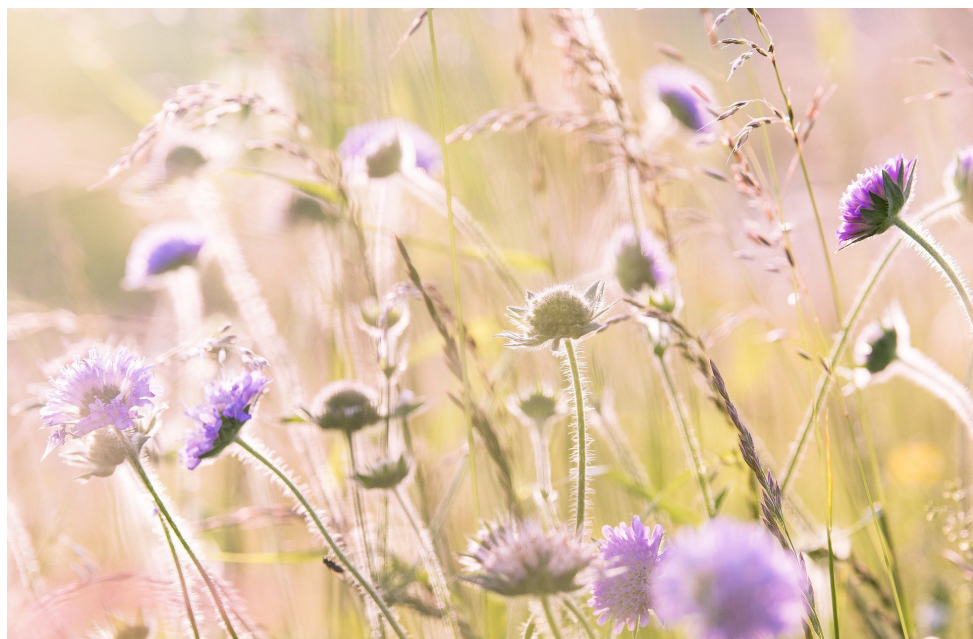


pesticides, insecticides, or neonicotinoids. You'll also want to focus on selecting perennials to ensure your plants come back each year and don't require a lot of maintenance.

Remember to think about more than just the summer growing season. Pollinators need nectar early in the spring, throughout the summer and even into the fall. Choosing plants that bloom at different times will help you create a bright and colorful garden that both you and pollinators will love for months!

### **Seeds vs. Plants**

Once you've identified your plant species, you'll need to decide whether to use seeds or start with small plants. While both are good options, your choice will depend on your timeline and budget. Seeds are more economical, especially for larger gardens, but will require more time. If you're using seeds, plan on dispersing them the fall or late winter ahead of your summer growing season. This gives the seeds time to germinate. Nursery-started plants cost more, but will generally give you a quick return on your investment and bring pollinators into your yard during the same growing season.



## **Planting Your Garden**

When you're ready to start planting, you'll need your seeds or plants along with essentials like gardening tools to break the soil as well as extra soil or compost and mulch.

## **Prepping Your Garden**

If you're converting an existing lawn, you'll need to remove grass and current plant cover and turn your soil to loosen it up. If you're planning on using raised beds or containers, there are a lot of pre-made options available, as well as simple designs to build your own. No matter where you decide to plant your garden, you'll want to add nutrient-rich compost or soil to improve the success of your garden.

## **Planting Your Seeds or Flowers**

When you're using seeds, keep in mind that they will need time to germinate, so fall and late winter are ideal times to get started. In the fall, disperse seeds and cover with soil. In the late winter, scatter seeds over the snow. The sun will heat up the seeds and help anchor them into the snow. The melted snow provides moisture that will help the seeds germinate.

If you're starting with small plants, make sure you follow frost guidance to avoid putting your plants in too early. Dig holes just big enough for the root system, then cover and reinforce the roots with soil or compost. Add mulch to reduce weed growth.

## **Wait, Watch, Water, and Weed**

It may take some time, but you will eventually see butterflies and other pollinators enjoying your garden. Make sure to weed and water your garden to keep it healthy. Keep in mind that it may take a couple seasons for milkweed to start producing flowers.

**Best of luck with your pollinator garden!**

## LIFE MEMBER GROUP

SANDI TINYK, LMG CHAIRMAN

As we begin to see light at the end of the Covid tunnel, supported by the governor's lifting of restrictions, the board of the Life Member Group has unanimously supported reinstating our annual summer luncheon in support of the LMG scholarship fund. It will be held at the end of the summer and details will be forthcoming soon. A Save the Date alert will be announced before or at the RIFGC Annual Meeting in April. We hope to book the Dunes Club again as the venue for this vital event.

Ex-Officio board member, De Feldman, serves as chair of the Nominating Committee as immediate former chairman of the Life Member Group. The following nominations for the 2021-2023 board of the Life Member Group, to serve for two years, are:

- **CHAIRMAN** – Cathy Moore,  
Former RIFGC President Gardeners of Westerly
- **VICE-CHAIR** – Nina Kurtz,  
Barrington Garden Club
- **TREASURER** – Paul Nunes,  
Edgewood Garden Club (*continuing*)
- **SECRETARY** – Paula Munko,  
Western Cranston Garden Club (*continuing*)
- **MEMBERSHIP** – Linda Alves,  
Western Cranston Garden Club
- **SCHOLARSHIP** – Ann Gralnek,  
Barrington Garden Club (*continuing*)
- **EX-OFFICIO** – Sandi Tinyk,  
Barrington Garden Club

These officers will be installed at the RIFGC Annual Luncheon this summer. Please plan to attend and enjoy this special event. RIFGC club members are urged to support LMG; to become a member, contact Membership Chairman, Adelaide Clifford (adelaideclifford@cox.net)

## FOREVER IN THE HEARTS OF THE WCGC



IN MEMORY OF

**JILL CALDARONE**

Founder of the Western  
Cranston Garden Club in 1971

The WCGC will happily celebrate its 50th anniversary in 2021. We have Jill to thank for our club's existence and her many years of dedication & service to our club, community, and state.

The WCGC will continue to live on thanks to her making a difference in our world.

# EX-OFFICIO REPORT

DEB ORT

*Good Morning,*

For the past six years, I have had a wonderful time serving the RIFGC as second vice-president, first vice-president, and the final two years as president. During this time I have met so many wonderful people and have enjoyed traveling to different states and attending New England and National Garden Club meetings and conferences.

My term has been unusual due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Many events were canceled, but we presented to the clubs opportunities to plant trees and help the National Forestry. The Federation also planted bushes and a tree for a RI Habitat for Humanity home, and we were able to give a scholarship to a worthwhile student. Unfortunately, we had to cancel two flower shows, Design Study, and Advanced Design Study classes. I was able, my first year, to attend many garden club events, such as luncheons, holiday events, several fundraisers with wonderful people, food, and speakers as well as installing new board members on several occasions. Thank you so much for inviting me to your events, even though this past year we had to be online, inside little square Zoom-boxes!

I would like to thank all the Board members and standing committee chairman during my term for all your time and commitment. All of you have helped keep the Federation strong. It has been great working with everyone. As have the 47 presidents before me, I feel honored to have the privilege to have led such a worthwhile organization.

Our dedicated garden clubs remain strong and continue to give greatly to their communities. I look forward to a better spring and summer in hope for a better coming year of gatherings that we can expect to enjoy so much.

*Thank you everyone.  
Deb Ort, Ex-Officio*

